

## **Legend of Agnikula Rajputs and the Origin of Gujjar-Gujarati Speaking People**

**By Bipin R. Shah**

### **The Influx of Central Asian Invaders and Tribes:**

By 4th century AD, Kushan and Saka Empire's hold had weakened and their rule was brought to an end by repeated skirmishes from satavahana rulers of south, and other confederacy of Hindu kings led by Gupta and other allies.

The Brihat-Katha-Manjari of the Ksemendra informs us "that around 400 CE, the Gupta king Vikramaditya (Chandragupta II) had unburdened the sacred earth of the Barbarians like the Sakas, Mlechha, Yavanas, Tusharas, Parasikas, Hunas, etc. by annihilating these sinners completely."

Kushans and its allies Kidarites were driven away from India and retreated to their central Asian base in Afghanistan until completely defeated by Hunas in 465AD that brought an end to Kushan Empire. The Hunas encroachment (White Epthalites) in India continued even after the successful repel by Vikramaditya Chandra Gupta II. The final defeat to Mihira Kula was handed down by Gupta allies led by Yashovarman and Baladitya Gupta. Mihirkula retreated to his base in Kashmir and thereafter he died. After his death, the Huna remnants merged into Indian society and settled down along with other remnants that had migrated over past three to four hundred years. The Sanskrit based naming culture was changing with evolution of more regional languages. There are records of intermarriage of Indian Royals princes with Huna brides.

This freed much of India from foreign invaders but forward defense bases at Afghanistan were lost forever and Hindu influence disappeared from Afghanistan, Siestan and Khorasan valley due to massive movements of people.

During this period, various tribes, clans and ethnicities are assumed to have entered India and intermarried with native Indians and settled down to adopt an urban life. The Indian society managed to allow the assimilation into India's myriad hierarchal caste system. The religious practices were expanded to be more inclusive and built around the core Vedic religion that is the present form of Hinduism. One such example is found in the list of Goddesses being worshipped by various communities and that is not even 100.00 % complete and it is mind boggling and is suggestive that different communities gave different names to same idols through indigenous inclusiveness of Hinduism. Click the link to see the list.

[http://www.inhername.com/honor/names\\_india.html](http://www.inhername.com/honor/names_india.html)

The Indo-Aryan Sanskrit based language dominated the languages of 65 % of India mostly confined to North and central India. The origin and ethnicities of various clans were already mixed and derived from Caucasoid and mongoloid group of central Asia with original habitants of India who lived there thousands of years before the new arrivals.

One of the groups that catch the attention of the historian was the tribe of Gurjara or Gujjar for short. This group plays a dominant role in middle ages and even now in many different ways. The state of Gujarat of India and various region and provinces throughout the subcontinent are named after them. (See some map examples below). There are various theories of their origin that involves most of the Gujarati speaking population of India Pakistan and south Asia. The Gujarati speakers are spread out elsewhere in the world as traders, entrepreneurs and in all categories of profession.

### **GURJARA-GUJJAR-GURJAR-GURJARA**

The major question relating to Gurjara history is its ethnic origin. Was their origin was foreign like many pastoral nomads of Central Asian steppe or were they one of the obscure tribe of India of indigenous origin not identified by Puranas or early historians? The historians and experts are split on this subject. Since the Gurjara have left many evidence in subcontinent with their names, so it is hard to imagine that they could have escaped the notice of various Puranic authors and early historians? Their footprints are everywhere stretching from Iran, Baluchistan, Afghanistan, and Khorasan valley, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

One most widely accepted view is they came from North of India, either coincidently or independently. They may arrive at the same time when Kushan, Saka, Kidarites or Huna tribes entered India or they could have come like Aryans in staged migration over hundreds of years. There are no data to support any conclusion except the folklore and sketchy family genealogy memories. They rose to sudden prominence in India during 5th century AD and built very large empire over 400 years.

Some most prominent Indian historian refutes the foreign origin thesis and advances the view that Gurjara is an original native tribe of India. However, there are no references of their existence during Vedic or Epic age texts. Most of the Indian Purana text or Epic literatures have labored to account for all of the tribes living in India and far out lands of Uttara Kuru and Param Kambojas but makes no mentions of Gurjara living next door. There are too many places in India, Pakistan, Iran, Afghanistan and central Asia that carry Gurjara names with a wide geographical spreads so their arrival in India cannot be ignored. The large number of Gurjara clans remembers their history of foreign origin, passed on through their ancestor's memories, folklores and genealogy records that claim their origin outside of India. All the experts agree on one thing is that they belonged to Indo-Iranian group of people who spoke Gojari language. The original Gojari language of Gurjara is very similar to old Rajasthani language. The present Gujarati language is derived from Rajasthani and Maharashtri language.

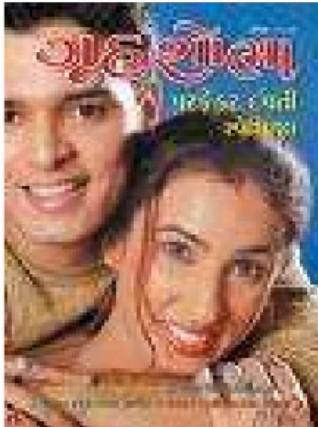
### **Foreign Origin of Gurjara:**

The foreign origin theory of Gurjara group are numerous and the various theories attaches themselves with historic tribes of the central Asia like Khojar, Hazara, Khosa, Kosar, Khijar, Chechen, Gaochar and the tribe of Georgia. The one that attaches the most traction is the Turkish origin of the tribe Called Göçer (pronounced: Guchar) that lived in and around Khorasan region of Central Asia. In pre-historic days and they were involved with the silk trades and practiced Hinduism all the way up to last Hindu rulers of Khorasan when Hindu Turkish Shahi rulers ruled the central Asia. During Kushan rules, the Chinese annals suggests that "the Silk Road travelers having last names as "Zhi" were automatically admitted and treated as traders in china." They were pretty much organized in a similar social structure common to all Indo-Iranian tribes that divided the group into the Kshatriyas (warriors), priests, traders, farmers (Kanabi) with nomadic characteristics.

It is always known that the mercantile class of Gujjar (Gujarati) always shines where ever they go and this is particularly well illustrated in USA, UK and Africa where they own various businesses such as gas stations, grocery stores, Dunkin donuts shops and other small businesses. They are well thought of as hard working entrepreneur and exhibit their inherited trading and mercantile skills acquired over generation from days of silk trades.

Göçer is an age old generalized Turkic designation for a collection of Central Asian tribes that included nomadic components. The traders and migrants manned the silk trades using the camels and horses as transporter. This is why there is a wider geographical distribution of these people and there are many places or regions that are named after them stretching from Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. Many Gujarati from earlier generation attach the designation "Ji" to their personal name consistent with their past tradition during Kushan era (Zhi). They named themselves as "Keshav-Ji" or "Vir-Ji" or "Dam-Ji" and so on. The "Ji" is respectable designation like "Mister" in English. The nomadic component of the same group still carries on their nomadic radiation and well represented by "Rabari" community of India that lives in western part of India. The mercantile component of traders and agriculturist along with warriors and Brahmins became urbanize and settled down. The stationary traders employed nomadic branch for trades and movements. Still many Gujarati family names associate themselves to a place in Afghanistan or far out villages of northern Afghanistan. Some examples of the families who claim their northern origin of their ancestors are: "Kandhar" from Gandhara or Kandahar, "Tolia" from village "Toli" and "Doshi" from the village Doshi in Afghanistan. There are many other clans with similar names like Hakani, Lakhani and so on that are common names in Gujarat, Pakistan and Afghanistan indicating their common ancestral clan origin.





**Gujarati couple- Mercantile**



**Gujarati Girl from Traders**



**Nomadic group of Gujjar**



**Nomadic Rabari of Kuchha**



**Nomadic Rabari of Rajasthan**



**Famous Rabari Singer of Gujarat**

The Gujjar or Gujarati of today are hypothesized to be the partial descendents of a number of aristocratic Eurasian peoples mixed with the historic Gujjar tribe of central Asia along with people already living in India. We already know that Indo-Saka, Kamboja, Yuen-Chinh and possibly Ye-tai (Hunas) who took part in various invasions of South Asia from the 2nd century BCE to the 5th century CE. They also mixed with local natives and possibly mixed with Gujarati speaking Indo-Iranian group of south Asia.

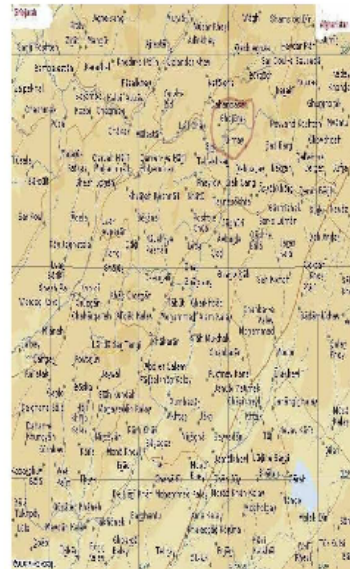
This melting pot of humanity on one hand gave us Gurjara-Partihara and other Agnivansh Kula Rajputs (warriors) who repelled Muslim aggression of 8<sup>th</sup> century AD and defended India and in modern history gave us Gandhi and Sardar Patel who led the liberation struggle to free sub-continent from colonial powers. Now, we have another strong leader of India, current Minister of Gujarat Mr. Mody made Gujarat a leading state in economic prosperity. The nomadic components of Gurjara have never changed their nomadic habits and kept moving from one place to another throughout the sub-continent.



Early Gurjara tribes were sun worshippers like many Indo-Iranian groups. Some examples of wider geographic Spread of Gujjar community is shown below:



**Gujjar Locality in Pakistan**



**Gujjar Locality in Afghanistan**



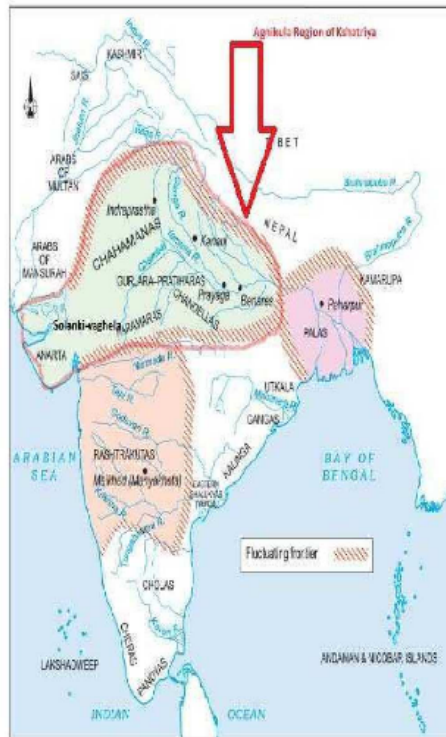
**Gujarat State in India**

Having now reviewed the history of Gujjar (Gujarati) people, it is now easy to understand why the legend of Agnikula was created and for whose benefits. The disintegration and fragmentation of Gupta-Maitraka-Satrap-Arab and Huna rule created a power vacuum in Northern India that allowed foreign and mix origin people to grab the power.

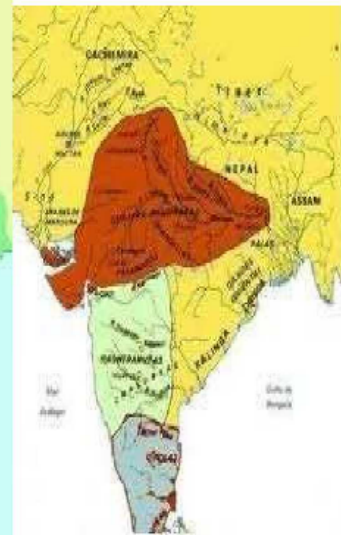
The disappearance of old Kshatriyas class warriors and emergence of new Kshatriyas class was born. The Gurjara Pratihara's ancestor Harishchandra was recognized as Brahmin-Kshatri meaning  $\frac{1}{2}$  Brahmin and  $\frac{1}{2}$  Kshatriyas of Gujjar clan. His successor Dadda, first established a kingdom at Nandipur, (Nandole) sometimes in early 8th century AD. The earlier Gurjara clans continue to follow their sun worshipping tradition. The Fire (Agni) worshipping was also observed in Central Asia, and played a prominent role in the burial rites. In Particular, an Aloukhana - a house of the fire, was discovered in Dzhanbaskale in Khorezm (Khorasan) that is suspected to be used for burial.

The epithet "Pratihara" after "Gurjara" comes with dubious distinctions. Some opines that they served as a body guards to other rulers like Guhilot while some say the epithet was given as the defender of the India's frontier since they repulsed and threw out Arab's from India's heartland. In spite of their military success, they must have remained delegitimized in the eyes of masses and Brahmins because of their obscure foreign origin. The three different maps show that there was three way struggle between three paramount powers of 6<sup>th</sup> century AD, Rastrakutas, Gurjara-Pratihara and Pala and the boundaries of their rule fluctuated over the period of next 400 years. The other Gujjar clans like Chauhan, Paramara, Solanki, Chavda, Vaghela and Guhilot remained the allies and fiduciary to paramount ruler of

**Imperial Gurjara-Pratihara. The most noteworthy rulers were Nagbhata-1 and Mihira Bhoj who expanded their empire to its fullest extent.**



Gurjara-Pratihara Empire at the height of Power Under Nagbhata-1



Gurjara Pratihara after Pala and Bengal received Help from Rastrakutas in a tri-parties struggle among three of them.



Mihira Bhoj statue



Nagbhata leading charge



Statue of Nagbhata-1

### Using Genetic Theory to Test the Foreign Origin Using Zak's data from Gene expression:

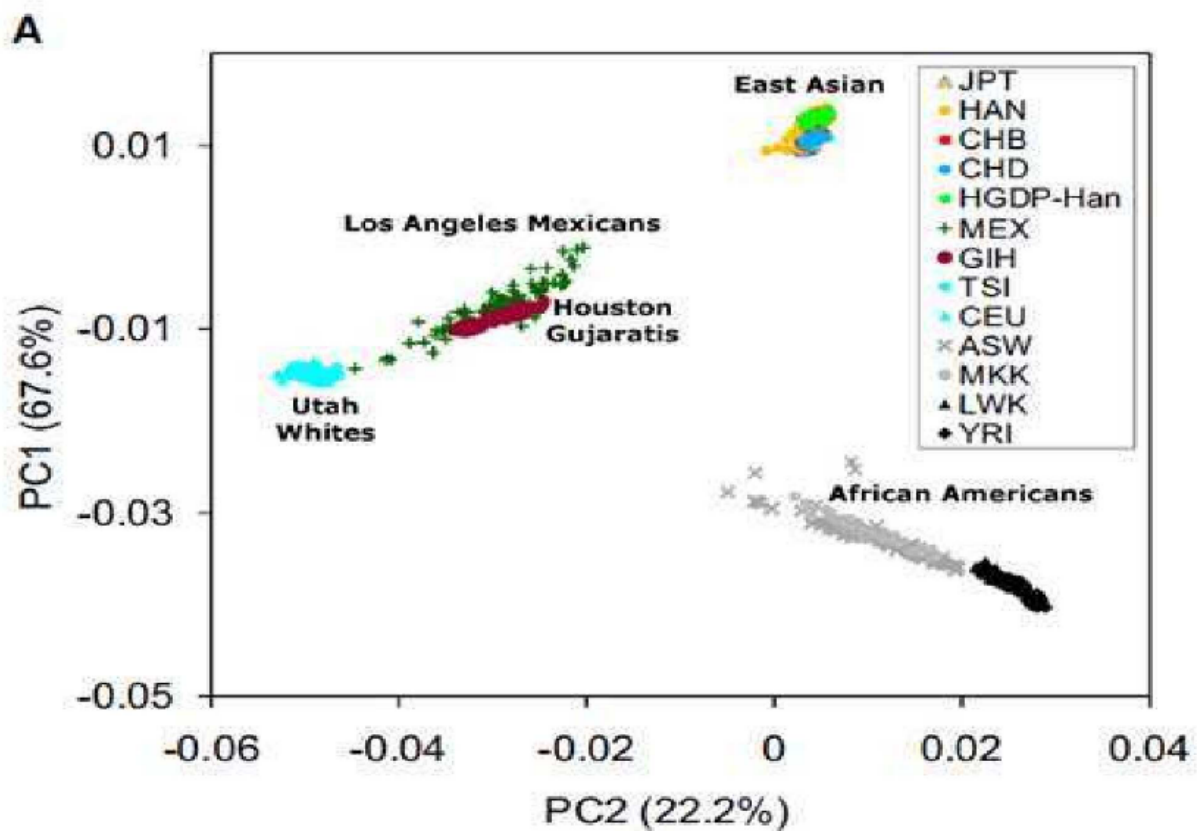
Razib Khan (Zak) of Gene Expression blog published the following data on a sampled Houston based Gujarati speaking people. They are the first immigrants from India residing in Houston,



Texas. He stumbled upon a very curious Genetic data plot. It shows the relationship of various continental populations on the first two principal components of Genetic variation. He concluded in a comparative study that genetically speaking Gujarati DNA are much closer to Hispanic community of Mexican Americans from Los Angeles. His conclusion is summarized over here.

**“In worldwide context South Asians and Hispanic Mexican can be viewed as somewhat analogous; a stable admixture between West and East Eurasian elements. Of course, the “East Eurasian” ancestry of Hispanics consists of the New World descendants of Paleolithic Siberians, while those of South Asians are the ancient long resident populations of that region of the world. In a distant sense the latter are likely the root population from which the former originated, mediated by an East Asian interlude (i.e., the populations of eastern Eurasia passed through South Asia during the Out of Africa movement). This lends the creditability of foreign origin of Gujarati population.”**

It is expected that Gujarati speakers will show the similar results when compared to other groups of South America when more DNA samples are available. The Indians vary from fair to brown complexion looks similar to many Hispanic population who has gone through similar admixture of genes. See chart below.





### **Agnikula Legend of Gurjara Warriors:**

Prithiviraj Raso by Chand Bardai and Navasahasanka Charitra of Padmagupta (11th cent AD) mentions the Agni Kula legend while describing the origin of Parmara clans. It gives an account as follows:

“Rishi Vasishtha created a hero from his Agni-Kunda to get back the cow that Vishwamitra had taken from him. Vasishtha then said: 'you will become a lord of the kings called Paramara'. Here “Paramara” as indicated is killer of enemy (i.e. Par-Maru= Killer of enemy). This hero's son Upendra performed many yajnas. His successor was Vakpatiraj. This event occurred during 1005 CE when Paramara Sindhuraja was ruling at Dhar.

R.S. Joon and other historians describe the Agni Kula legend in additional details that has an anti-Buddhist tone when Buddhism had already left India:

“ When the Kshatriyas by adopting Buddhism became non-martial and also started disregarding Vedas, Shastras and other religious scriptures, the Brahmins started this 'Yagya' at Mount Abu, situated near the kingdoms of Gujjar kings, to refine and redefine the Kshatriyas and safeguard the religion. There was a huge congregation of Brahmins who brought with them the idols of Rishis, Munis, Brahma, Vishnu and other Hindu gods. The Brahmins recited 'Ahutis' against Buddhist devils. First a man arose dramatically out of 'Agni Kund' was Parmara. Then followed came a second person and he was named 'Pratihara. The third person rose from the palm of the priest and was called 'Chalukya'(Solanki). He was also a brave man- the fourth person who emerged through this process was big built, broad chested man, with a wide forehead and radiant eyes. Due to his impressive personality, he was called 'CHAUMUKHA' or CHAUHAN. He had a bow and arrow in his hands with which he started general massacre of Buddha-Bhikshus. By the side of (Agni Kund) there was a heap of Plantain leaves and shoots. A man came out of this and was called 'DOD' Ragouts. All these brave creatures of Agni Kund slay the Buddhist 'Rakshasas' (Demons). It is said that miraculously every drop of blood of these Buddhist 'Rakshasas' gave birth to a devil. To counter this, Four Queens 'Ranis' started sucking the flowing blood and this stopped the rebirth of the Buddha Devils. These four 'Ranis' became the goddesses of their respective races as under:

- (a) Chauhan -Asa Purna (Goddess who fulfils one's desires)
- (b) Pratihars -Gajan (Goddess who spreads the fame)
- (c) Chalukya- Khenaukh (Goddess who kills enemy)
- (d) Parmar –Sachhya (Goddess who tells the truth)

R.S. Joon is a Jat historian who correctly interpreted the legend of Agnikula but the legend itself remains contradictory to the factual and historical events. None of the Agnikula Vansh Rajputs rulers who are all Gurjara origin showed any hostilities towards Buddhism or other minority religious sect of India. Quite the contrary, they patronized them all. The Jainism played a big role with Paramara, Chauhan, Solanki and Pratihara rulers as indicated

by some of the most monumental Jaina temples of Ranakpur, Mt Abu, Chittore and other places of Western India. During the rules of these new Agnivansh rulers, the Jainas were appointed to key post like "Mantri" (ministers) or "Dandnayak" (Chief of judiciary). Kumarpala Solanki attended several Jaina temple activities and declared that the people do not engage in violence or killing of any animals for food or other rituals. So, this statement of anti-Buddhism is the fiction or imagination of the Brahmin writers.

Alf Hiltebeitel in his book "Rethinking India's Oral and Classical Epics: Draupadi among Rajputs, Muslims" describes this anti-Buddhist statement in Agnikula legend as brahminical variant not supported by inscription or historical facts or Buddhist textual references. Furthermore, Harsola copper Grants of Siyakas (949 CE) mentions Paramara as belonging to Rastrakutas. The absence of their Agnikula origin is noted by historians. See below other evidence of the myth.

### **Possible Motivating Factors for First Parmara Ruler:**

1. It appears that this was onetime event for first Paramara dynasty who assumed powers of small enclaves when Gurjara Pratihara's imperial kingdom disintegrated by 1000 AD. Paramara clans who held small pocket of territory were probably disfranchised due to the loss of patron powers and fear of the rise of Chauhan and Solanki and other fiduciary Rajput contestants. This ceremony was designed as a rallying cry.

2. It is unknown as to how much astrology consultation with Brahmins played a role in Agnikunda ceremony. As per Brahmin's suggestion this process could have been locally organized and other rulers were probably invited but never participated. As Paramara dynasty grew in power after several decades at Dhar this became a just memory and never mentioned in inscription. The legend somehow got recorded by Brahmins into Puranic text to legitimize the new Kshatriyas. They acquired collective designation of "Rajput" (sons of Kings) after Ghuri's invasion for collective defense against the foreign invasion. There is no historical basis for such a fanciful and imaginary incident and creation of Agnivansh race. Furthermore, their Goddesses were new to Indian religion but somehow were reincorporated in Hindu culture.

### **Harsola's Inscription of Grants A & B:**

Grant A: grant to father and Grant B: grant to son, apparently the grants were linked by a ring, with the royal seal (Garuda) at the end of Grant A, which was placed after B.



Harsola copper Plate Grant –A



Harsola Copper Plate Grant B

#### Text:

The first verse after the opening Siddham invokes blessings of Vishnu in form of Vaharaha (*sukhayantu van... etc.*). The second verse first mentions the sovereign king *parama-bhattaraka maharadhiraja* (etc.) Akalavarsha, with titles *prathvivallabha-shrivallabha*, who had learned at the feet of *parma- bhattaraka* (etc.) *Amoghavarsha*. Later it in line 8, it mentions Siyaka in this family (*tasmin kule... jaatah*). Further (lines 11,12,13) it mentions for the same Siyaka, *mahamandalika-chudamani- ..shri-siyakah-bhujiyaman..kumbharotaka-grama* ..Here, the inscription explicitly mentions Siyakas as a *mandalika* (i.e. a feudatory) and a village in his domain. Note that *Parama-Bhattarka* indicates a sovereign king, who is not under a higher king.

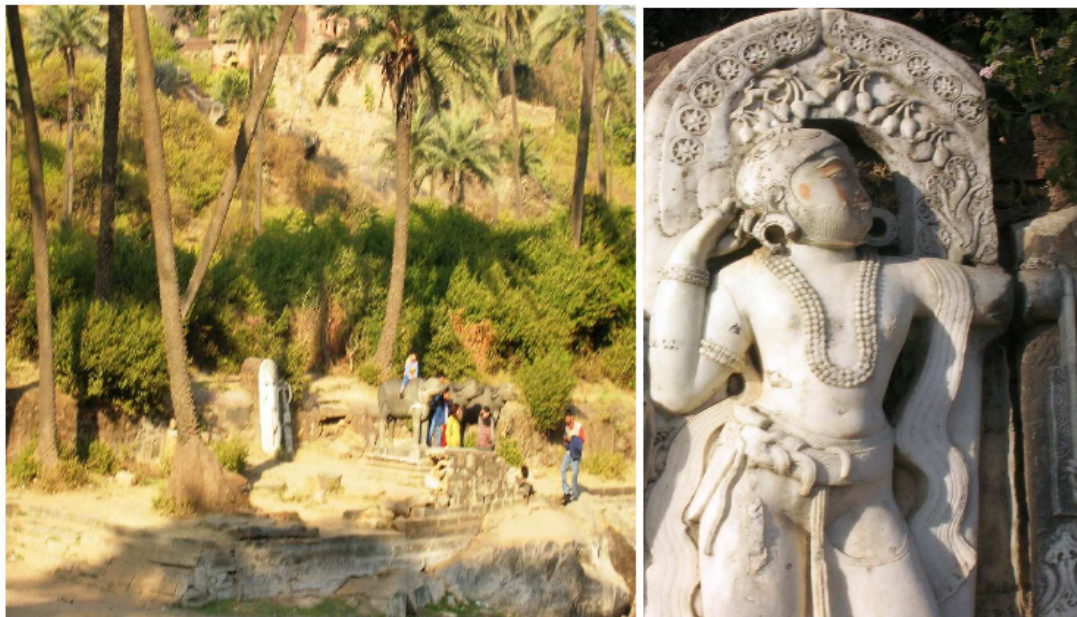
#### Other Evidence of myth of Agnikula:

- 1005 CE: Padmagupta writes *Navasahasanka-charita* during the rule of Parmar Sindhuraj (about 995-1055) of Dhara. He mentions creation of Paramara from Agnikunda at Mt. Abu by sage Vasishtha first time ever but no one else.
- 1000-1055: Paramara and paramount ruler of Paramara King Bhoja of Dhar never mentions Agnikunda in his copperplates inscriptions of their genealogy.
- 1042: Vasantgarh inscription mentions Paramara origin from Agnikunda.
- 1070-1093: Udayaditya, Udayapur prashasti mentions Paramara origin from Agnikunda.
- The original copy of *Prithviraj Raso* by Chand Bardai does not mentions Agnikula origin of Kshatriya but newer copies composed later mention the Agnikunda legend as a passing reference.

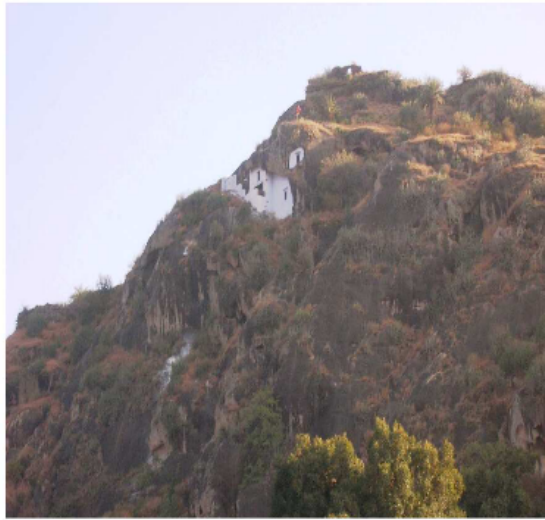


- Agnikunda legend in Bhavishya Purana is mentioned but the date of the entry remains unverified. It mentions four clans Paramara, Chauhan, Chalukya and Partihara were created to annihilate the Buddhists during the time of Asoka that is at least 1000 years before the Agnikunda ceremony.

We went through all of the common sense evidence of the historical importance such as inscriptions and conclude that this is a myth and not a reality and only confined to "Paramara" clan. The purpose of this is to create a Brahminical version with anti- Buddhist tone of by-gone era when Buddhism emerged as a dominant religion In India under Maurya at the expense of Brahmanism. This passage was later introduced in some text to legitimize the ruler's Kshatriyas status with the same anti-Buddhist tone when Buddhism had left India and played no major role. Strangely, it mimics the Hunas attitude towards Buddhism and it will not be a surprise if some of these Kshatriyas emerged from intermixing with Hunas (White Epthalites). The author visited the sites of Agnikunda and took pictures at Mt. Abu and came away with the same conclusion as one of the "Puranic Tale with no historical value." The picture also includes a Hill top fort where Vimal shah hid the Somnath treasure from Ghazni hidden. See my paper on Somnath story on my face book page or academia.



Agnikunda site at mount Abu with three bulls pierced by Paramara king Upendra (statue)-first Paramara



**Achal Garh fort where Somnath treasure was hidden by Vimal Shah**



**Agnikunda where ceremony was held by Brahmins**

## **References**

1. The Paramāras, c. 800-1305 A.D., Pratipal Bhatia, 1970,
2. H.V. Trivedi, Editor, Inscriptions of the Paramaras, Chandellas, Kachchhapaghatas and two minor Dynasties", part 2 of the 3-part Vol III of Corpus Inscription Indicarum, edited in 1974 by (published in 1991).
3. Rāshtrakūṭas and their times, p. 120, Anant Sadashiv Altekar, 1967.
4. More Documents of Jaina Paintings and Gujarati Paintings of Sixteenth and Later Centuries, Umakant Premanand Shah, L. D. Institute of Indology, 1976,
5. The dynastic history of northern India (early mediaeval period), Hem Chandra Ray, 1973
6. H.V. Trivedi, Editor, Inscriptions of the Paramaras, Chandellas, Kachchhapaghatas and two minor Dynasties", part 2 of the 3-part Vol III of Corpus Inscription Indicarum, edited in 1974 by (published in 1991).
7. History Of Gujarat by J. W. Watson Cosmo Publication New Delhi 1983.
8. Travel in western India by Colonel James Tod-section on Agnikunda Page 73.
9. Retrieval of History from Puranic Myths; L. Bhargva, D.K. Print World, 1998.
10. The History of Gurjara-Pratiharas, B.N. Puri, Munsiram Mahoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd.